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Civilization on the Brink III

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In some parts of the world, locals have had just about enough of the immorality celebrated and broadcast through American entertainment and pop culture. Former judge Robert Bork pointed to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 as one significant illustration of the problem. As soon as the wall came down, American rock music, blue jeans, and sexuality flowed into the formerly Communist nation of East Germany. "You almost began to want to put the wall back up," Bork remarked.

As Scott Galupo of The Washington Times explains, "If there is one proposition on which Western European elites and radical Islamists, American social conservatives and snobby latte town aesthetes all seem to agree, it is this: American popular culture is a subversive thing."

Radical Islamic leaders have been watching these developments for some time. Sayyid Qutb, one of the most significant founders of radical Islam, was offended by the gross immorality he detected in America during a visit in the 1940s. As Galupo relates, Qutb thought he saw the essence of American culture at a church dance held in Greeley, Colorado. These supposedly committed Christian believers danced as a disc jockey played the racy classic, "Baby It's Cold Outside." Qutb saw the dance as a repudiation of modesty, decorum, and religious devotion. "The dancing intensified," he wrote. "The hall swarmed with legs . . . arms circled arms, lips met lips, chests met chests, and the atmosphere was full of love." If this kind of immorality happened at church, Qutb reasoned, one could only imagine what took place in other parts of the culture.

Later, Osama Bin Laden would portray the United States as Islam's enemy in a "war against God." From one perspective, it is almost as if America planned a calculated effort to offend moral principles around the world. We are a net exporter of pornography, sexually explicit entertainment, celebrated violence, and lawlessness. Political Islamists looking for moral ammunition to use against America need look no further than statistics related to adultery, premarital sex, divorce, illegitimate births, and other phenomena.

Even as America's parents now see our national culture as increasingly toxic to our children, we are reminded that others are concerned about their children as well—and the world is watching.

Those looking for absolute proof that our culture is coming increasingly unhinged need look no further than the February issue of Consumer Reports magazine. For years, Consumer Reports has been the trusted adviser to America's consumers on everything from vacuum cleaners to automobiles and microwave ovens. Now, it has published an analysis of birth-control options that includes abortion and offers a buyer's guide to condoms. "Long gone are the days when there were just a few, well-known contraceptive choices," the magazine declared. "Today's options include rings, patches, and IUDs. Older contraceptive drugs are being used in ways that include emergency contraception, which is still misunderstood."

The Consumer Reports analysis could have been written by agents for Planned Parenthood. The magazine celebrates

virtually all forms of birth-control devices, and confuses technologies that claim a contraceptive effect with true contraceptives.

Interestingly, the magazine seems particularly keen to advocate the use of IUDs [intrauterine devices]. “This highly effective method of contraception has never recovered from the 1970s,” the magazine relates, “when the Dalkon Shield intrauterine device turned out to put users at major risk for fertility-destroying pelvic infections.” Nevertheless, “today’s IUDs have an excellent safety record, allow women years of ‘set it and forget it’ contraception and can be less expensive overall than other birth-control methods.”

Of course, IUDs are not contraceptives at all—at least not in a legitimate use of the term. The word “contraception” implies the prevention of conception, the fertilization of the egg by the sperm. The IUD does not prevent fertilization and conception, however, but prevents the successful implantation of the fertilized egg within the uterine wall. In order to disguise the fact that this is not a contraceptive device at all, the term has been redefined so that “contraception” is now broadened to mean not only the moment of conception, but successful implantation in the womb. In other words, the IUD is an abortifacient, not a contraceptive.

In other sections, the magazine celebrates the development of new hormonal medications that are “not your mother’s birth-control pills.” Furthermore, the magazine urges women to disregard concern about the use of hormonal contraceptives. “Women used to fear that hormonal contraception increased the risk of cancer, but it now appears the opposite is true. Long-term studies involving thousands of women have established that having taken the pill reduces the risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer by 40 percent or more. Nor do modern birth-control pills increase the risk of breast cancer.”

When it comes to condoms, Consumer Reports offers a wealth of information and advice. In the magazine’s view, condoms are to be preferred over many other technologies simply because of the added “benefit” of preventing or inhibiting the spread of infective disease. Without going into unnecessary detail, we can report that the magazine reviewed more than twenty different brands and varieties of condoms, ranking them in terms of price, special features, and strength. Many readers were no doubt surprised to be informed that one Web site offered condoms in 55 different sizes.

The most shocking portion of the Consumer Reports analysis covered abortion. “Women having an abortion in the U.S. can choose one of two methods,” the magazine specified: “the so-called abortion pill or a surgical procedure.” Those seeking legal abortions should first date the pregnancy, usually by ultrasound. Armed with this knowledge, the magazine then advised women to consider as options the drug-induced abortion that “completely expels the pregnancy in more than 90 percent of users, usually within a day,” or a surgical abortion, described as “the standard surgical abortion method in the U.S. for pregnancies in the first trimester, when 88 percent of legal abortions take place.”

This is a truly chilling analysis offered in the cold and dispassionate language of a consumer review. Describing “Mifeprex,” the American brand name for the infamous abortion pill, RU-486, the magazine specifies that, if used within the first seven weeks of pregnancy, the drug “causes the developing embryo to detach from the uterine lining, but not to be expelled from the woman’s body.” The article goes on to identify a second drug, Cytotec (misoprostol) as the drug necessary to force the woman’s body to expel the embryo.

Absolutely devoid of moral context, the magazine’s analysis is presented as if abortion is simply another consumer option. Dealing with surgical abortion, usually known as “suction curettage,” the magazine describes the procedure in this way: “The cervix is enlarged to a diameter of about a half-inch, either by the use of dilating rods or the drug misoprostol. The uterine contents are sucked out using a manual or electric pump while the woman is under local anesthesia. Some women may have cramps afterward, and also intermittent bleeding for a week or two.” Note carefully that the unborn baby is referred to as nothing more than the “uterine contents.”

As a final insult to human dignity, the magazine ranks “comparative risks” related to abortion and pregnancy. “In the U.S., the fatality risk with mifepristone is slightly less than 1 per 100,000 cases, compared with 0.1 for surgical abortion at 8 weeks or less. Pregnancy itself carries a fatality risk of 11.8 per 100,000.” In other words, following the logic of this mathematical analysis, pregnancy is much more dangerous than abortion. Of course, the magazine’s twisted analysis is concerned only with the life of the mother. The unborn child is not even deserving of mention.

The birth-control analysis offered by Consumer Reports offers a unique illustration of how America has changed over

the last several decades. A significant moral and cultural barrier is crossed when matters of life and death, focused on matters of sexuality and birth-control, are presented as little more than consumer choices.

For all too many Americans, one birth-control method is simply as good as another. Concerns about the dignity of human life and the sanctity of sex are simply disregarded in a headlong rush to sexual fulfillment. Sex is turned into a playground of excitements while birth-control methodologies are presented as consumer choices to be treated as little more than products available on the open market.

The logic of this worldview is now clear. Sex is stripped of its moral context, abortifacient birth-control methods are repackaged as contraceptives, condoms are ranked by strength and special features, and abortion is presented as just one more option—but an option even safer than pregnancy.

This is the face of America to the world. This special issue of America's most respected consumer magazine represents an undeniable illustration of America's moral confusion and increasing decadence. Furthermore, it ranks as further evidence of this culture's increasing regard for the dignity of human life.

Observers, both foreign and domestic, looking to gauge the moral climate of America and its influence in the world, will watch closely. Those who see America as a net exporter of immorality, sexual license, and amoral lifestyles will no longer need to hold up Penthouse, Playboy, and the racy men's magazines—they can just hold up the February issue of Consumer Reports.

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